

*THE INTERPRETATION OF THEMES: OPENING THE BAUM-STADDON INKBATTLE*

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This is a project long aborning, gestating over about 3 years from its conception. It began by William Baum's kind agreement to review J. E. R. Staddon's *The New Behaviorism* (2001) for this journal. He warned me, however, that he could not be particularly kind to Staddon's book. I responded that the very last thing I wanted to see in *JEAB* were "kitties and bunnies" reviews. Given this, and after some discussions with Baum, Staddon, and the past editor of *JEAB*, K. A. Lattal, the following project was initiated. Once Baum's review was completed, I sent a copy to Staddon for his commentary. Meanwhile, I set about to recruit some major contributors to the field and other distinguished parties to join the battle in commenting both on Baum's review and Staddon's response to it. As expected, not all those I courted were able to participate, but I was delighted to receive positive responses from three outstanding behavior analysts. Their extensive and thoughtful writings on conceptual and philosophical issues in behaviorism are well known and highly regarded, yet have revealed strong differences in views among them. The contrib-

utors will be quite familiar to *JEAB* readers: John Donahoe, John Malone, and Charles P. Shimp. When Staddon's response was completed, I sent it along with Baum's review for their commentary. After some editorial processing, the final versions of the three commentaries were then sent to Baum and Staddon for a last round of replies.

However one might respond to the tone and substance of these papers, they are all instructive in addressing major recurrent themes in the theoretical and empirical domain of behavior analysis: The nature and place of theory; the role of models along with their structure and assumptions; the applications and interpretive extensions to the wider world of laboratory findings and principles; molar versus molecular approaches to understanding the dynamics of behavior; what did Skinner say, what did he mean when he said it, and why should we care; and even how all these debates among behavior analysts relate to issues in the current philosophy of science.

Some readers might be dismayed by the occasional intensity expressed in these papers. One should keep in mind, however, that the depth of the controversies as well as the passions they inspire are profound testaments to the intellectual vigor and fecundity of our field—we are not only alive, but kicking as well.

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